

SPIELBERG

The mega-bucks maestro

He might be scruffy and uncomfortable off the set in a tuxedo, but the whiz-kid of Tinsel Town's income is estimated at a staggering \$1 million a day!

STEVEN Spielberg is Hollywood's most successful leading man — even though he's never starred in a film in his life.

The 36-year-old moviemaker is the whiz-kid of today's cinema industry. More people have seen movies made by him than by any other director in the history of film, a milestone statistic he passed at the age of 33.

And the rewards for his achievements have been phenomenal. He controls a multi-million-dollar business empire, owns a string of mansions in California and personally earns a staggering \$1 million a day!

Spielberg has earned so much money for the giant Universal Studios that the top executives at MCA Incorporated, the conglomerate that owns the studios, gave him a \$4 million "cottage" on the lot as a thank-you present.

"It's the most amazing gift I've ever received," said Spielberg, a scruffy, shy man who is more at home lounging around his office dressed in a T-shirt, jeans and tennis shoes than he is wearing a tuxedo at a chic Hollywood party.

Two of his films *E.T.*, which earned Universal \$210 million at the box-office, and *Jaws*, which earned them \$135 million, have become the No. 1 and No. 5 domestic film video champions up to now in the United States — depositing even more megabucks into the coffers of the studios and also Spielberg himself.

This unlikely movie mogul was born in Cincinnati and raised in Phoenix. He made his first film at 13 and later, while at university in California, so impressed Universal executives with one of his films that they put the young moviemaker under contract.

Spielberg recalled his early days in Hollywood and one of the first directors he met there, John Cassavetes.

"Cassavetes is one of the first people who ever talked to me in Hollywood and gave me the time of day," he said.

"He met me when I was sneaking around Universal Studios watching other people shoot TV shows. He

pulled me over and said: 'What do you want to do?' And I said: 'I want to be a director.'

"He said 'Okay, after every take, you tell me what I'm doing wrong. And you give me directions.'

"So there I was, 18 years old, and there's a professional film company at Universal Studios doing this TV episode, and after every take he walks past the other actors, walks past the director, he walks right up to me and says: 'What did you think? How can I improve it? What am I doing wrong?'

"And I would say: 'It's too embarrassing right here Mr Cassavetes.

Don't ask me in front of everybody, can't we go around the corner and talk?'"

The director was the first man to give Spielberg a proper job on a movie set as a production assistant.

"I hung around and watched him shoot the movie and John was much more interested in the story and the actors than he was the camera," said Spielberg.

"He loved his cast. He treated his cast like they had been part of his family for many years. And so I really got off on the right foot, learning how to deal with actors as I watched Cassavetes dealing with them.

ABOVE RIGHT: Steven Spielberg appears uncomfortable in formal gear.
BELOW: A Spielberg monster creation for his latest hit, *Gremlins*.





"I've carried what I consider to be somewhat of an unfair reputation that I've paid more attention to the epic splendor, the epic spectacle of my films than I have to the performances of the cast."

Following an award-winning television movie, *Duel*, Spielberg was given the opportunity to direct his first feature film, *The Sugarland Express*. The blockbuster *Jaws* and the UFO drama *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind* followed — and, as they say in Hollywood, he never looked back.

In 1979, Spielberg directed his first comedy, *1941* — which has proved to be his only failure. Two years later he teamed up with George Lucas — the man behind the *Star Wars* films — to direct *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. The

film was the most successful box-office hit around the world that year and won numerous awards, including five Oscars.

Following this success, Spielberg co-wrote and co-produced *Poltergeist* while at the same time directing *E.T.* — *The Extra Terrestrial*, which became the biggest box-office success of all time.

Spielberg is a workaholic who enjoys being under pressure.

"I work better when I work faster. It took 59 days to shoot *E.T.* and *Poltergeist* took 57. I didn't realise this until *Raiders* which took 73 days to shoot," he said.

"I work much better when I work faster — and I have less time to intellectualise something to death. Less time to go behind the scenes and pace and say: 'Well, the angle I've set up and the direction I've given the actors is wrong.' Because if I leave myself too much time to think I'll spoil something. *1941* is an example.

"There are parts of that film that I spoiled by having too much time to think about what I really wanted to do, not just doing what I felt like doing. So I work much better intuitively."

Last year Spielberg had two hit movies — *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, which he directed, and *Gremlins*, on which he was executive producer. Another Spielberg production, *Fandango*, is just out in the U.S., establishing what he hopes will be the pattern for his career: three films a year as a producer; one of which he'll direct.

Spielberg may be getting richer and more famous by the minute but he doesn't live that kind of life.

He went on: "I don't live on the French Riviera with seven women feeding me while I sit in the sun with a reflector under my chin. I'm proud that I go home at night and watch TV until I fall asleep, and then I wake up the next morning to go to work."

RIGHT: Spielberg and *E.T.*
BELOW: *Indiana Jones* (Harrison Ford) confronts his greatest fear, a snake, in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

In fact there is only one woman in his life, beautiful film star Amy Irving. Their relationship was a rather on-off affair, with Spielberg being romantically linked to Kathleen Carey and Barbra Streisand at times, but now Amy is expecting his baby.

Spielberg lived with 30-year-old Amy, whose films include *Carrie*, *Yentl* and *Honeysuckle Rose*, for four years but their relationship soured in 1980, just three months after they had become engaged.

Ironically, they got back together again at the end of 1983 because of another of Spielberg's girlfriends. He was helping the then woman of the moment, Barbra Streisand, edit her *Yentl* film. Spielberg now admits he fell in love with Amy all over again as he watched her on the film.

Now the two spend most of their time together at Spielberg's fabulous mansion in Bel Air or at his beach home in Malibu. There are rumors they will soon tie the knot because of the impending birth.

"I want to have kids," he said. "I made *E.T.* because I'm a frustrated parent. I want some of my own. At the end of every day Henry Thomas went back to his own parents. And in *Poltergeist*, Oliver Robbins and Heather O'Rourke went back to theirs.

"So I was a day-care father for the duration of both those movies. I want to be a day and night dad. I'm anxious to put that part of my life together. It's a very big urge.

"I really have two lives — I have a film life and I have a personal life. And I've worked hard at keeping them apart from each other although I need the personal life to supply the ideas and the real life for my film life.

"I just try to make movies that I'd like to see. I'm an innocent. Well . . . a cynical innocent. It's hard to remain an innocent in real life."

